

Glaucoma: Sight's Thief

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month

Glaucoma is called the “sneak thief of sight.” It robs you of your vision so slowly that you may not notice. First to go is your peripheral, or side, vision. People in the early stages of the disease turn their heads to compensate. They rarely notice until tunnel vision results.

Glaucoma comes from improper flow of fluid. This leads to increased eye pressure and optic nerve damage. Your doctor can test your eye pressure during your routine eye exam. First, your doctor numbs your eyes with drops. Then a tonometer uses a puff of air to measure the pressure in them. This is often called a “puff” test.

Are you at risk?

Open-angle is the most common type of glaucoma. Symptoms are difficult to notice, which is why early detection is crucial. You are most at risk if you have:¹

- Family history of open-angle glaucoma
- African-American, Latino, or Asian heritage
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Steroid use
- Eye injury (secondary open-angle)
- An age of 60 or more

Treatment Options

Vision lost from glaucoma is permanent. But some treatments slow its progress, alleviate pressure, and prevent blindness.

- Prescription drops can be used to help drain the eye and reduce pressure. In recent years, two promising new topical treatments were invented.²
- Laser surgery is often helpful. It can reduce production, increase flow, and promote drainage of fluids.
- Microsurgery is a more serious option. The surgeon creates a channel to reduce eye pressure to allow fluid to drain. This type of surgery comes with many risks. Blindness—temporary or permanent, infection, and bleeding are possible.¹

Fight the thief with diet

A 2019 study shows diet matters! Leafy greens can make open-angle glaucoma less likely. Normal or low-tension glaucoma risk drops by nearly half. Vitamin B3 also shows prevention promise.²

Fast facts³



\$2.86 billion
annual cost to
U.S. economy



>3 million
Americans living
with glaucoma



3–4x
More likely in
African Americans

1 <https://www.glaucoma.org/glaucoma/are-you-at-risk-for-glaucoma.php>, October 2019.

2 <https://www.optometrytimes.com/article/rethinking-what-we-know-about-glaucoma-2019>, January 2019.

3 <https://www.brightfocus.org/glaucoma/article/glaucoma-facts-figures>, June 2019.

Material discussed is meant for general informational purposes only and is not to be construed as medical advice. Although the information has been gathered from sources believed to be reliable, please note that individual situations can vary. You should always consult a licensed professional when making decisions concerning eye care.

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